

Message Text

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7361
INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON
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AMEMBASSY OTTAWA
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C O N F I D E N T I A L TOKYO 6326

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, ENRG, JA
SUBJECT: JAPANESE FAST BREEDER REACTOR

REF: TOKYO 5952

SUMMARY. ADVENT OF FIRST JAPANESE FAST BREEDER REACTOR
HAS BEEN SOURCE OF GREAT NATIONAL PRIDE, SYMBOL OF JAPANESE
DETERMINATION TO PRESS ON WITH NUCLEAR ENERGY PLANS, AND REMIN-
DER OF CURRENT POLITICAL (AS WELL AS TECHNOLOGICAL) OBSTACLES.
END SUMMARY.

1. REPORTS OF JAPAN'S FIRST BREEDER REACTOR, "JOYO"
(ETERNAL SUNSHINE), GOING CRITICAL APRIL 24 MADE
HEADLINE NEWS AND WERE OCCASION OF GREAT NATIONAL
PRIDE AND SUBSTANTIAL EDITORIAL COMMENT.

2. NEWS STORIES STRESSED THEMES THAT JAPAN WAS FIFTH
NATION IN WORLD TO DEVELOP FAST BREEDER, JAPANESE
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TECHNOLOGY RELIED ON EXTENSIVELY, AND, ALTHOUGH IT
ONE STEP TOWARD ENERGY INDEPENDENCE, TECHNICAL AND
POLITICAL PROBLEMS REMAINGM IN SPECIAL STATEMENT FOR
OCCASION, SCI/TECH AGENCY HEAD UNO EXPRESSED HIS GREAT JOY
AND INTENTION TO FORGE AHEAD WITH FAST BREEDER
DEVELOPMENT. ONE OF OFFICIALS DIRECTLY RESPONSIBLE FOR DEVELOP-
MENT OF "JOYO" ASSERTED THAT, FOR NATION POOR IN ENERGY RESOURCES

LIKE JAPAN, FAST BREEDER (TECHNOLOGY) NOT MERE ECONOMIC ISSUE, BUT MATTER OF "LIFE OR DEATH." HE COMPARED "JOYO" DEVELOPMENT TO ANOTHER GREAT OCCASION FOR NATIONAL PRIDE, CONSTRUCTION OF BATTLESHIPS YAMATO AND MUSASHI IN IMMEDIATE PRE-WORLD WAR II PERIOD.

3. EDITORIAL COMMENT STRESSED SIMILAR THEMES. UNIVERSALLY PROUD OF JAPAN'S ACCOMPLISHMENT, THEY GAVE BRIEF EXPLANATIONS OF TECHNOLOGY INVOLVED, UNDERSCORING ECONOMIES OF FAST BREEDER TECHNOLOGY AND POTENTIAL FOR GREATER JAPANESE ENERGY SELF-SUFFICIENCY. YOMIURI, IN NATIONALISTIC TWIST, STRESSED ACHIEVEMENTS OF JAPANESE SCIENTISTS, SAYING THIS "EPOCH-MAKING" EVENT HAS AT LAST ENDED JAPANESE DEPENDENCE ON FOREIGN TECHNOLOGY WHICH HAS PERSISTED FOR OVER CENTURY. ALL PUNDITS STRESSED ADVANTAGE OF FAST BREEDER IN INTERNATIONAL ENERGY COMPETITION.

4. EDITORIALISTS WENT ON TO POINT OUT, HOWEVER, GREAT COST IN ELABORATION OF FAST BREEDER TECHNOLOGY AND SUBSTANTIAL TECHNICAL PROBLEMS, PARTICULARLY OF SAFETY, INVOLVED. THEY UNDERLINED FACT THAT TECHNOLOGICALLY JAPAN HAS LONG WAYS TO GO BEFORE FAST BREEDER TECHNOLOGY CAN BE EMPLOYED COMMERCIALY. NOTING THAT CONSTRUCTION OF PROTOTYPE FAST BREEDER SCHEDULED TO BEGIN NEXT YEAR, ASAHI, FOR EXAMPLE, SAID IT OPEN QUESTION WHETHER COMMERCIAL FAST BREEDERS CAN BE BROUGHT ON LINE BEFORE YEAR 2000. ALL COMMENTATORS WERE SUPPORTIVE OF JAPANESE EFFORTS TO UTILIZE FAST BREEDER TECHNOLOGY AND URGED THAT R&D EFFORTS BE REDOUBLED.

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5. IN ADDITION TO TECHNICAL PROBLEMS, ALL PAPERS POINTED UP SPECIFIC POLITICAL PROBLEMS RELATING TO FAST BREEDER. ALTHOUGH PAPERS PHRASED IT DIFFERENTLY, EACH STRESSED NECESSITY OF REPROCESSING TO FAST BREEDER OPERATION AND STATED FLATLY THAT NEW CARTER ADMINISTRATION POLICIES ON REPROCESSING AND FAST BREEDER SHOULD NOT STAND IN WAY OF JAPAN'S NUCLEAR ENERGY PLANS.

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